

APPROVED 10/31/2007

Present: Charlie Kimball, Chair, Pat Martel, Mike Nygren, Andy Kohlhofer, Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Donald Gates, Jr., Doug McElroy, Librarian Barbara Bassett and Library Trustees Eric Abney and John Hennelly, Public Keith Stanton (who video taped the meeting), and recording secretary Kathy Arsenault.

The meeting was called to order by Charlie Kimball @ 7:04 pm

The Fremont Parks & Recreation could not be here, so the Fremont Library will present their budget proposal. Barbara Bassett distributed budget proposals for the Fremont Library. Members reviewed the budget proposal.

Charlie Kimball suggested that introductions around the table should take place, all concurred and introductions followed.

Barbara Bassett read the budget starting with wages. She has done some research comparisons that were comparable with the Fremont Library employees.

She is proposing a 5% increase in salary. (Pending the wage survey, currently in progress). She explained that we don't know where those numbers will come in at. She suggested waiting to see where the wage matrix comes in at. Mike Nygren asked if they could present their budget as is and could raises be implemented (at a later date) and be retroactive. Discussion began regarding step increases and full time employees and the criteria for the step increases. Heidi Carlson described in detail the criteria for this. Barbara reminded all that this was the 1st time the library was included in the wage matrix study. Barbara would like to propose a 5% increase in wages, the Selectmen would like to see a 3% raise. Heidi Carlson explained that potentially every employee could see changes in wages. The wage matrix study was to be used as a tool in the budget process. The last time the study was done was in 2002. It was noted that typically the norm for increase in wages is a COLA, which is retroactive pending approval of the operating budget at town meeting.

Barbara continued, there have been changes in the job description for Cathy Murdock. She has enlisted more responsibility and duties, resulting in the increase in her hourly wage and her hours. Maegen Bassett (the Library Page), will see an increase due to the increase in minimum wage.

Andy Kohlhofer asked about wages spent, it was clarified that the numbers were based on year to date data and that some monies haven't yet been spent.

Barbara explained that it is the same staff since we moved into the new building. Things are going well. She has no plans to replace the Library Page, (Maegen Bassett), when she leaves for college.

Books. \$20,000. Barbara stated that every year she holds off on spending the book budget. She could live with \$18,000, but would like to see the full \$20,000 this year, to not have to hold off on purchases. Andy Kohlhofer asked if there are books you would like to purchase, but haven't because of the budget. Barbara Bassett said yes, they need more large print books, books on tape (CD), etc. She would also like to see more in the children's section and the teen section. Doug McElroy asked how do other towns compare to Fremont with money spent on books, and are we spending more because we have lots of space (in the building) that we are trying to fill up. Barbara said that the circulation is continually increasing. When making purchases of books they typically are able to purchase books @ a 44% discount through Baker & Taylor. Eric Abney added that the library has seen a 300% increase in the circulation.

Peter Bearse entered the meeting @ 7:16 pm.

Pat Martel asked if the library rents movies. Barbara said that no, they loan them out just the same as books. Barbara added that they have a lot of movies, but don't buy them, they are all donated.

Office/Crafts Increase of \$500.00. Andy Kohlhofer asked what is purchased with that money. Barbara stated that all materials such as covers, labels, preparing books, crafts for summer reading programs, t-shirts, etc., are purchased with that money. For the summer reading program, the state suggests the theme for it, and the library purchases items to coincide with that theme. The Friends of the Library has helped to pay for certain programs and special guests. Barbara mentioned that they do receive grants occasionally. They now have downloadable books from the State Library. This program has been accessed over 100 times in one month. This has proven to be very successful and very simple to use. Eric Abney explained that you have to be a Fremont Library card holder, and that you can access from you home computer, and if you want to keep the downloadable book, you can burn it onto a cd. This overall saves the library money. This program cost the library nothing to begin with, but will cost \$500.00 annually to continue to support.

Dues/Membership. Barbara continued down the lines items, giving brief rationale for each. Peter Bearse asked about the automation system, and Barbara explained that the library is all computerized, nothing is hand stamped.

Computers. The Computer technician would like to see the library increase the number of computers. The library has 7 computers currently. John can work on the 7 computers from his home and backup is performed nightly. This number includes maintenance on the computers and technical support. The technical support is contracted at \$2,800.00/year. It is proposed to see an increase of \$500.00 this year.

Peter Bearse commented that he can not use the library computers to read or copy a disk that he brings in. He noted that the computer system does not have the capability to read the disk. Barbara will check into this. Discussion continued regarding disk/CD compatibility. They have had some problems with teenagers and websites, therefore the tech has placed many safeguards on the system, perhaps too many. They will check into this further.

Peter Bearse stated the he goes to the library at least once a week, and it is sometimes empty, and used by only a few. He questioned what the usage of the library is. Barbara stated that they have increased the pieces in circulation from 4,500 to now almost 17,000 in circulation. She does not have the ability to count the number of persons using the library, but can count the number of books going out. Peter asked about the amount of funds raised for last year. John Hennelly stated the Fremont Library Association and the Friends of the Fremont Library help to raise money for the library. The money that they raise is donated to the Fremont Library. Peter would like to know how much is raised by these organizations. Barbara does not know exactly how much, because some money is donated right to the program specifically. John Hennelly stated that the Library Association donated about \$3,400 and the Friends of the Library about \$300-400. The start up for the downloadable books and the website (\$1,600 combined), the storage shed (\$2,200), and full automation of the Library (\$15,000) were all donated thru these programs and private individuals. Peter Bearse suggested the Town perhaps began a challenge grant. Discussion about this took place.

Barbara explained that there are no late fees charged, but that there is a guilty jar on the counter. She added that it is too much work to charge and try to collect late fees. They use the money from the guilty jar to add to the checking account for small purchases. She noted that they have about \$2,000 - \$3,000 dollars in checking /money market account. (All of which is donated). Charlie Kimball suggested having a backup plan as to additional signers on the checking account. He added that if something should happen, someone else could step in and be able to handle the accounts. Barbara agreed and will look into this further.

Phone/Elec./Furnace Oil. Barbara continued with these line items. Heidi Carlson explained that all oil is contracted through the town. She added that all electricity for town buildings is supplied by PSNH (all except highway shed). Heidi mentioned that the town bought in early. It was noted that the Selectmen helped with the numbers on this section of the library budget.

Andy Kohlhofer noted that there is a budget increase of over 10% per year, every year. He added that it is small in comparison to other budgets, regardless it is still increasing continually by over 10%, and expressed concern over whether this was sustainable.

Charlie Kimball asked about the \$2,000 for the new computers, and how many do they plan to purchase. Barbara Bassett said that 2 new computers will be purchased with the \$2,000. It was decided to keep the \$2,000 in the operating budget, not in the capital reserve fund. It is planned, for the future, to keep purchasing 2 computers per year. They would like to purchase a new computer for the children's room. Brief discussion continued regarding computers systems.

Barbara asked about the panic button that the library has been waiting for over 5 years. Heidi mentioned that the panel at the library will not accept further expansion for a panic button, but they will look into other methods.

Pat Martel asked how many hours the library is open. Barbara stated that it is open 35 hours per week. Andy Kohlhofer asked if they plan to have any more open hours, and it was answered that no, not at this time. Barbara stated that they have increased from 30 in 2006 to 35 in 2007. Discussion about open hours and increase of circulation took place.

Charlie Kimball suggested a poll take place, to see what people would like to have for more desirable open hours. Donald Gates, Jr. mentioned that in 2005 it was determined to spend more money in open hours not on books. Barbara will look into conducting a poll from residents.

Barbara stated that the fact of the matter is that the library is about \$850 over the budget because of the website and computers, etc. She reminded the committee that she doesn't actually go over the budget, because she will save money from the book budget and slide it over to cover the other expenses.

Barbara keeps current lists of the books for patrons, what they like to read, what they don't like, etc. Peter Bearse asked what books are we short on. Barbara Bassett replied that she would like to increase books in the areas of biography, children's, young adult, adult fiction, and adult non-fiction. She noted that the library accepts donations of all books with the exception of textbooks and encyclopedias.

Donald Gates, Jr. asked when you go over budget, where do you get the money from, Barbara and Heidi replied that they will pull it from something else, and at the end of the year, money would be transferred from some other department.

With nothing further to discuss, the Chair thanked the Library Trustees and Librarian, who left the meeting @ 7:54 pm.

Heidi Carlson then began review for Election/Registration (4140). The Supervisors of the Checklist worked with the Town Clerk to propose this budget. The primary has not been set yet. It appears as though the presidential primary will take place in the 2007 fiscal year. Heidi explained the basic formula for the Supervisor's budget. This budget also includes food for the election officials for the day of election. The budget reflects money for computer supplies and the voting machine. The budget is substantially higher than last year; this is primarily due to the fact that 2008 will have 4 elections as opposed to just 1 in 2007. Heidi mentioned that the Supervisors did not participate in the wage matrix

study. In order to participate in the wage matrix study, departments were required to submit position questionnaires, the Supervisors of the Checklist did not.

Discussion continued and Peter Bearse asked why there is so much money appropriated, and not spent. Heidi noted that is because the wages and expenses are year to date numbers, and that they have not purchased the computer yet. Discussion regarding wages paid for elections and election employees began. It was noted by Heidi that the Selectmen do not receive stipends for Election Day and the Town Clerk is on salary, which is shown elsewhere.

Peter Bearse mentioned that it seems that wages were put into the budget that were not spent and should we discount the budget based on that. Charlie Kimball continued discussion regarding the money that doesn't seem to get spent.

Peter Bearse made a motion to recommend \$1,000 less than the proposed budget. Charlie Kimball stated that we will make note of that recommendation and the Budget Committee will go back to it at the end of the session.

Charlie Kimball reviewed and compared numbers from years. It was noted that in previous years, all of the money hasn't been spent. Andy Kohlhofer continued discussion on this and Kathy Arsenault noted that some of the things are absolutely necessary to have for elections, such as signs, etc. She mentioned that the state mandates a great deal of this, when it comes to elections.

Heidi Carlson continued with rationale for the Town's Legal Services Budget. There haven't been many changes in the past few years. A few minor zoning-variance matters, that are still ongoing. The Town's attorney reviews items such as these as well as warrant articles, planning and zoning issues, etc. He bills the Town of Fremont approximately every 2 months. Peter Bearse asked about the money proposed as compared to the money actually spent. Charlie Kimball and Donald Gates, Jr. explained that the Town can't foresee problems regarding legal matters. Donald Gates, Jr. stated that it is like forecasting a hurricane. Heidi stated that they prepare the budget as best they can and that the Town uses the NH Municipal Association as much as they can.

Peter Bearse asked (hypothetically) if the budget was less and turned out to be more, where do we come up with the money. Heidi responded that we have to take it from someplace else. Andy Kohlhofer asked if this was all a part of the warrant article. Heidi said that yes it is and that the MS7 breaks it down by department and in greater detail. Charlie Kimball asked about departments going over 10% in a particular line and Heidi Carlson explained things can be moved around from line to line, but the Town cannot overspend the bottom line. Donald Gates, Jr., noted that even though the Selectmen and School Board can move within operating lines, that it was decided years ago to come to the Budget Committee with that all can be on the same page.

Heidi continued with the budget for the Health Department (4415). She noted there are negligible changes. Trudie Butler is the Health Officer and Thom Roy is the Deputy Health Officer. The Health Department is responsible for septic systems failures, mosquitos/EEE, dead birds, water testing, etc.

Trudie Butler receives a stipend that is paid out at the end of the year. She also attends workshops and training sessions throughout the year. Mileage to Concord, phone calls from home. All of this as explained by Heidi is included in the budget. Charlie Kimball offered discussion regarding health officer duties.

Peter Bearse questioned the water testing line. Heidi Carlson explained that Trudie does the testing samples and transports them to the State Lab. No money was spent out of that line this year. Peter

Bearse asked about how many hours per week the Health Officer works. Heidi believes it is a couple of hours a week, but she is unsure of the exact amount. Heidi will ask Trudie and get back to the board.

Direct Assistance (4442) Heidi broke the budget down different this year, allowing for more cases at a smaller dollar figure per case. There are many more cases this year than previous years. She had to bring down the dollar amount per case from \$1,000 to \$750. Direct Assistance requires certain criteria from the Town, which is designed for immediate needs, not long term needs. Heidi has grave concerns she is not going to make the budget this year. Most other programs have different criteria than those at the local assistance level. Heidi continued that Fremont has a food pantry that does help residents. If we don't have enough money we will have to get the money from somewhere else in accordance with the Statute. She added that liens are placed on the property if necessary and applicable. Andy Kohlhofer asked what do you think is the primary cause of the increase in cases. Heidi responded that it could be many things such as loss of job, in over their heads, overspending, etc. She added that it is very surprising what the levels of mortgages are and that it is a sign of the economy; foreclosures and bankruptcy are higher than we have ever seen. Discussion continued in depth regarding welfare and direct assistance.

Peter Bearse noted that a good part of this total budget really depends on your knowledge of these cases. Sometimes from year to year there may be the same case numbers, but often times, they are different. Pat Martel suggested that a narrative be created to see how many new cases, compared to old, in comparing years past to current situations.

Heidi continued explaining food vouchers, training, programs, etc. She added that she will go back and create some statistic comparing cases from year to year. Pat Martel came up with the average number for each case. Charlie Kimball asked about how much of money spent on cases do we get back. Heidi explained that it depends and is different from case to case. It depends on many things such as what the need for assistance is, disability, etc. In general you do not get state welfare reimbursement. Sometimes property liens are paid back. Peter Bearse asked about 3 cases having 0 dollars spent. Heidi stated that they started the process of assistance but then dropped out before any money was spent. Some discussion regarding the Fremont Food Pantry took place and its' support for Fremont residents.

The minutes from the Oct. 17, 2004 meeting were reviewed. A couple of clarifications should be made and changed. Heidi Carlson, Mike Nygren, Andy Kohlhofer have some revisions. Some discussions regarding the wages and clerical line for the fire rescue need to be addressed and clarified. Andy Kohlhofer motioned to accept the minutes for October 17th as amended, seconded by Mike Nygren. The vote was approved.

With nothing further to discuss, Andy Kohlhofer motioned to adjourn the meeting, Doug McElroy seconded and the meeting was adjourned @ 9:03 pm.

The next scheduled meeting of the Budget Committee is Wednesday, October 31, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Arsenault
Recording Secretary